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## Professional Trapping: Bobcat, Fisher, Weasel and Martin Methods

Walter L. Arnold

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# PROFESSIONAL TRAPPING

REVISED

## BOBCAT, FISHER, WEASEL AND MARTEN METHODS



Bobcat trapped in open end  
Cubby Pen, by Walter Arnold

BY WALTER L. ARNOLD

Price \$2.00



**Mountain-side set, showing the lower pole to stand upon.**



**The open end set showing position of guide and stepping sticks.**

## TRAPPING THE BOB-CAT

In view of the fact that there is such a vast variation in size, color and habits of the wild-cat thru-out the different regions of the United States and Canada, I wish to make it plain I am dealing mostly with that type of 'cat found here in Northern Maine, to which my experiences have been confined — he is called the Bob-cat here.



Years ago, during my fur-buying days, I received many shipments of wild cat pelts from even the very far west and it was then I learned they vary in markings and color according to climate and conditions. In correspondence with trappers I soon learned that the 'cats, we will say from the western plains, were easy to trap and would readily come to scent and bait. This is based on my contact with trappers from those regions — not on my actual experience. I could be wrong but do not believe I am.

The keen sense of smell with which nature has provided all fur-bearers is their most dependable means of seeking out food as well as detecting the presence of enemies and danger. As might be expected, this sense is more highly developed in some species than others; compared with the fox the bob-cat is cold scented, but do not let this fool you when he apparently ignores a bait or scent as this does not mean he has not seen or smelled it. Much of the time our Maine bob-cat is full and not hungry and shows little interest in the "nice things" the trapper has prepared for him. If he goes past, within three feet of the trap, the average trapper will think he never saw the set, but, the chances are Mr. 'Cat stood right there in his tracks and looked it over a long time and then continued on his way. As a rule they do not tread around the same as a fox. Don't let anyone kid you, they have a much better sense of smell than you or I and good eye-sight and see and smell far more than many trappers think they do.

In adjusting themselves to the varied conditions existing in the different parts of the country 'cats do not become equally developed in all respects. The severe climate and conditions in Northern Maine make it a plain case of the "survival of the fittest" and has developed a tough, hardy animal that is nothing less than a bunch of fighting fury when a trap snaps onto its foot, and if the trap is not a strong one the first desperate lunge is likely to free that paw made up of tough bone and hard muscle. I once saw where a big bob-cat with one swipe of its paw actually ripped and tore the head free from the body of a full grown porcupine, the head and body laying several feet apart. During a careless moment the 'cat had evidently received a mouth full of quills and then in a sudden rage lost all sense of reason and instantly decapitated its victim. I followed the tracks and soon came to where Mr. Cat had gone under the trunks of a pair of dry, blown over cedar; I got down and looked and saw where he had bitten and chewed into the dry wood and many broken off quills lay on the snow and ground, he then went his way. I realize many will not believe this but I know what I saw.

'Cats are found here in most any type of country, but the greater numbers hunt the swamps and dense thickets on either high or low ground

where rabbits are abundant. In Maine many develop the deer killing habit; this probably originates from the periodical scarcity of rabbits which occurs every few years. With the rabbit supply diminished they soon learn that a deer jumped out of its yard and into three or four feet of snow is a most helpless creature and easily dispatched in just a few moments. Even the very largest bucks go down before them; this of courses encourages them to pair up and attack deer on bare ground, if they can get close enough. I have seen the records plainly written on about one third inch of snow, on frozen ground, where two 'cats surprised a huge buck, by the tracks, and a real battle followed, one 'cat got badly injured and slunk off into a thicket, leaving a trail of blood and then the buck got his chance to run and was chased by the other 'cat for some distance but the buck could run faster and the 'cat gave up the chase. As the deer was bleeding badly I followed but the bleeding finally stopped. I returned and picked up the trail of the bleeding 'cat and went no distance before jumping it. She would not work out of that thicket into the open but kept circling just ahead of me, coming back several times and going over the same places, was hard to follow as there was but little snow. I finally gave up as I had many miles of trap line ahead of me. Two or three years later I caught a big female 'cat a few miles from there, found one hind leg had been smashed up some years before. Leg and hip were stiff, bones had been broken in many places; I always believed it was the same 'cat I followed that day in the thicket. So, if I harbored any doubts about a bob-cat having the courage to attack a big deer on bare ground they vanished that memorable day.

**TRAPS.** A selection of traps that are likely to hold the largest Maine 'cat consists of the No. 3 Newhouse, the No. 14 Oneida Jump, the No. 2 Victor Coil Spring and the No. 2 and No. 3 Victor Long Spring. The No. 2 and the No. 3 Blake and Lamb Long Spring are fine and this No. 2 is compact and very powerful and a fine trap for a trapper who is trapping both bob-cat and fisher, Longspring traps have tremendous holding power. Ordinary No. 2 and No. 3 traps will hold a good percentage of Maine bob-cats and no doubt will hold all 'cats in some other sections of the country, but they positively will not hold all of the big, powerful Maine 'cats. This statement is based on my actual experience.

**BAITS.** Baits should be fresh and as bloody as possible. A whole or half rabbit; skun out carcass of a porcupine; large pieces of lungs, heart or liver, bullet shattered junks of bloody meat, bones with scraps of meat attached, the head split open and other scrap meat from deer or other game animals. Also large pieces or whole carcass of a beaver; a muskrat carcass; feathers and left-overs from partridge and other game birds; blood saved when a beef or sheep has been butchered and a pint sprinkled or thrown in back of the trap often does the trick. Out in open farming country, hens and other farm fowls might work very well. Try and learn just what the 'cats are living on in your locality and use that, fresh and bloody. Remember, scents are generally used to attract the attention of Mr. 'Cat, you need something good for him to go after to eat after he arrives.

**SCENTS.** Up here, bob-cats are not as easily attracted by scents or lures as are some of the other fur-bearers. They are finicky — one day interested in a certain scent, the next day not. The Lynch Formula, consisting of fish oil, beaver castor, muskrat musk and oil of catnip is often used and can usually be obtained all bottled by scent dealers. A good lure is

made by mixing equal parts, once ounce ground mink musk, one ounce ground muskrat musk, one ounce vodka and around 15 drops of pure skunk musk. Makes a heavy body lure that is fine for 'cats also very good for fisher. Oil of catnip is sometimes used, but if there are porcupines around they too will come in and ruin the set. Wild cat urine is very good to sprinkle around the set and over the trap. My favorite scent is now skunk musk. A little placed on a branch or something three feet or more above the set, or if one is making a dirt hole set may be placed in the hole.

Here is a good way to handle skunk musk. Obtain some fine softwood sawdust, sift thru common window screen. If not absolutely dry bake it in the oven until dry. Take one or two ounces by measure, mix in all the skunk musk the sawdust will absorb to make a thin mixture. Now melt some hogs lard and when on the point of starting to congeal, mix and stir in the sawdust and musk. Just lard enough so there will be a heavy paste. Put into wide mouth jar with tight fitting cap. It can now be carried without danger of spilling, easy to apply at set with a small stick and best of all it holds the skunk odor for a longer period of time than would the clear musk. Skunk musk is not easy to obtain — make what you have last much longer.

**TRAP BEDS.** I do not care to have the pan of trap higher than the ground outside of the jaws. Operating here where there is much zero weather, snow storms with now and then a freezing rain storm mixed in. I have long since given up the idea of trying to bury my traps way out of sight. When necessary, a trap bed is dug, if the ground or conditions are such that the trap is likely to freeze down I place wax paper or a piece of white birch bark under the trap. Soft leaf mould, not hard dirt, or if convenient, ant hill dirt is worked around close to outside of jaws, a little of same worked between jaws and pan. The jaws are left free and loose. If there is a branch of evergreen fern handy, that is placed over the pan and the outer edges will cover parts of the face of the jaws. If very small ferns, some times a small one over each half of the pan and cover parts of the jaws. Or other times just a bit of leaf mould or ant hill dirt sifted over parts of the jaws and the pan. When all thru I can still see parts of the trap. Such sets are hard to freeze down. I camouflage, not cover my traps and that means fox traps and all. When fox were worth money I would take them in my land sets in December and January.

When placing a trap on a crossing log I like to have an old notch, but if I make a new one I smear it over with mud or dirt and make it look old. Then on goes the trap and then an evergreen fern over the pan; stalk of fern can usually be tucked under some part of the trap so wind will not blow it off; or at other times I will break the ice and obtain from the water a big, wet maple leaf, any big leaf will do, and place over the pan; or, if obtainable, a very thin piece of rock moss that I will soak in the water and place over the pan. In cold weather these items will quickly freeze to the pan. I make no attempt to cover the jaws and take 'cats, fox and other animals in these log sets. In cold climates, too many beginners make the sad mistake of tending lines of frozen in, deeply buried traps that only work during a thaw. No — I am no longer interested in packing around big bottles of No-Freeze junk, which I will admit prevents traps from freezing in, but also in most cases turns the trap into a bed of rust. I have much better luck with camouflaged traps. My traps are clean, carry the odor of the woods and are colored dark by being boiled in a native bark solution.

SET NO. 1. If a den in which they are living or a carcass upon which they are feeding is located during the winter, the trapper will notice they travel in the same tracks when approaching or leaving the den or bait. If possible, approach such a trail from behind a clump of small bushes or other concealment. Reach over and slip a trap under the light snow so the pan will be directly under one of the tracks. If it is necessary to place the trap on the snow, then push it down so the pan is an inch and a half lower than the surrounding snow, then from behind you scoop up some light snow and fill in lightly over the trap so all is level, then gently make a depression over the pan with the square end of a stick, until a round place resembling one of the tracks is formed. This will take the sharpest bob-cat if well done. Never mess around or go into their den, or right up to any dead animal they are feeding upon. Any new signs of disturbances are likely to scare away the old, wise ones, never to return. It requires considerable experience to become expert in examining the tracks and being able to tell whether they have been used one or more times. Four bob-cat can travel thru the woods together, all using the leaders tracks, and the average trapper looking at the trail would never surmise there had been more than one 'cat.

SET NO. 2. Although I do not recommend doing so when general conditions and the animal's habits are the same as here, but one can make sets at carcasses upon which bob-cats are feeding, either on snow or bare ground, but these sets must be made with the utmost care. Don't mess around and leave tell-tale signs. After the trap is placed and covered with the material right there, usually hair, everything should look exactly the same as it did before. Do not use any scent here. Trap should be placed where the 'cat is likely to crouch while eating. The bob-cat does not tread around the same as a fox or other animal, but holds its feet in exactly the same spot; if a foot is lifted for any reason it is almost sure to go right back to the exact spot taken up from. This is why they often visit a set without being caught. When a carcass is found, upon which the 'cats are feeding and it has been partly or wholly covered with leaves or hair, in the portion they are eating out of, one may feel quite certain they intend to return; if, however, no effort has been made to conceal that spot their return is uncertain.

SET NO. 3. The Dirt Hole Set. This set as made for fox is equally effective for 'cats. However, keep in mind that the bob-cat is a much taller and longer legged animal and on the average is not as likely to step as close to the hole as a fox. Trap bed should be dug out and trap placed therein. If possible have one side of the trap bed a couple inches from a small bush or bunch of weeds; on the other side a small bush may be pushed into the ground, or a branch with plenty of dry brush on it laid on the ground with the small branches sticking up and also close to trap bed. It may be necessary to trim off the ends of some of the longer tips to make a clear passage past the obstruction so animal will come in over the trap bed. Now dig a slanting hole four to six inches deep, with rim of hole seven inches from center of trap pan. Work some of this loose dirt between the jaws and pan of trap, not under the pan. If trapping where there is no danger of freeze-up then place a piece of wax paper over pan and out to inside edge of jaws, this will prevent covering from filling in under the pan. Now cover jaws and all with about one third inch of loose dirt. If danger of freeze-up do not cover jaws with dirt, camouflage with a bit of grass, pieces of leaves or what have you. Right in front and close to end of trap



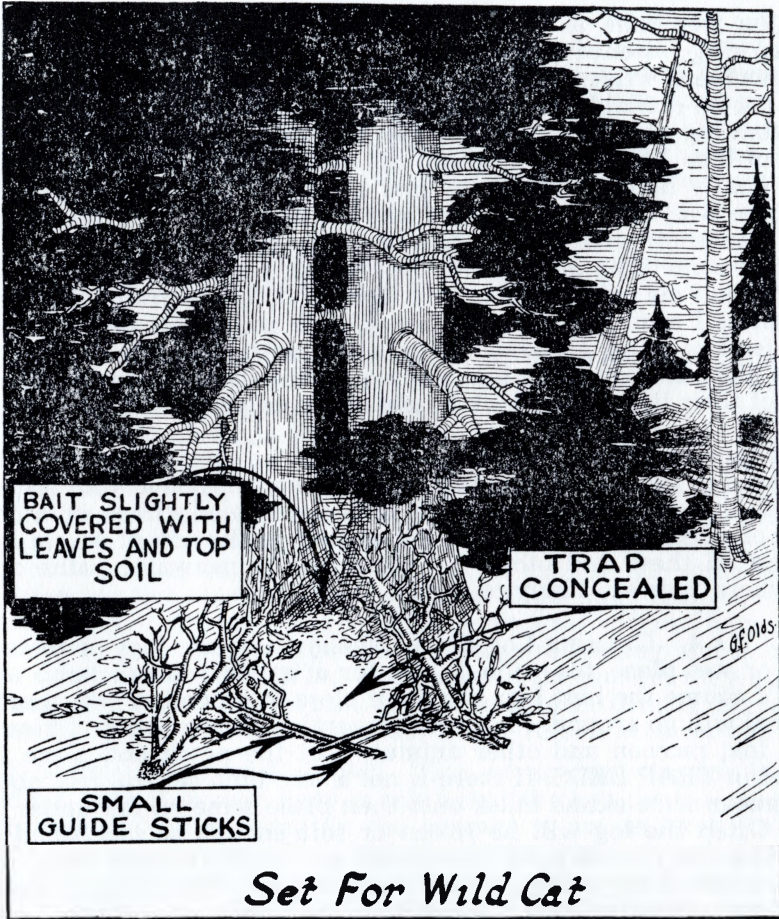
and using twigs or small sticks about half the size of a lead pencil or size of pencil, shove in the two sticks on a slant so they cross each other and form a wide V at the end of the trap and about four inches from center of pan with the crotch of the V about two inches from the ground. These are guide sticks that will cause the animal to step over and onto trap pan. Bait or scent or both are placed in bottom of the hole.

Fasten trap solid at the set or use a three foot long, hardwood clog with trap ring fastened midway of clog. Do not use common fox grapples for the northern wilderness 'cat. Years ago I came upon a log set just as a bob-cat got in, probably scared him into it, was within 25 feet of him when he left that log and I never ran so fast and hard in my life trying to keep in sight of him. That grapple would hit small bushes, logs etc. and fly into the air; finally he brought up for just a moment on a small fir. I did not hesitate, he was now over 100 feet away, I shot him right there with my 30-30. I then knew what had become of fox traps in the past, when I would find where something got in and then search for a mile in all directions and never find my catch, trap or any signs of it. Those grapples were taken off as fast as I came to them and heavy, inch and a half beech clogs went on. A friend of mine, I learned later, along with his partner came onto a 'cat that had just gotten in, fox grapple on the trap, the two of them had the run of their lives, thru thick brush, and nearly lost him at that.

This type of set may be varied; for instance, in open country, bait or scent placed in the base of a clump of weeds or what have you, trap placed as described above; or utilize a hole under a root or stump, or a crack in the base of a ledge, a hole under a log or even in the end of an old log. Try and make all these and other 'cat sets close to runways, paths or other places where 'cats are likely to travel.

SET NO. 4. Crossing Log Set. Usually these are logs or trees across a brook or wet place, too wide or wet for a 'cat to want to jump or wade across. Of course the best logs are those close to a pond or wet marsh that the animal will go around. I have had several such logs where I have taken bob-cat, fox, raccoon and other animals. Cut the notch and place trap as described in TRAP BEDS. If there is not a tree limb several feet above the trap to smear some skunk musk onto then place some on the under part of the log. Often the log will be rotten or soft enough so two small sound, guide sticks can be sharpened to a point and stuck into the wood to form stepping sticks. I have even, when wood was not frozen hard, driven the blade of my axe in, making a lengthwise gash each side of the log and at the right angle so the sticks can be sharpened to a thin chisel edge and stuck in, providing guide sticks which greatly increase the chances of a catch. There are many little tricks connected with this Wilderness Bob-cat Trapping.

SET NO. 5. Curiosity Set. Select a narrow, natural opening that leads back several feet into a dense thicket, off the main trail. Up in this opening, a foot or more off the main trail, prepare trap bed and place a trap and camouflage it well. Set in the guide sticks and if opening is wide place some brush each side of guide sticks. Now three or four feet further back, hang up a large piece of deer skin, or a rabbit skin, or even a piece of red cloth with skunk musk on it. Of course one can use a big, fresh meat



**Set No. 7. But use guide and stepping sticks as shown in set No. 10  
pictured on inside front cover.**

bait. The bait or decoy to be two feet above the ground. It is at such sets a few drops of wild-cat urine can be sprinkled on the ground around and beyond the trap.

SET NO. 6. Hanging Bait Set. Up a foot and a half from the ground fasten a fresh bait against a stump, stub or tree. Out about 12 inches from base of such object conceal a trap. Stick some brush into ground each side so animal must pass over the trap to inspect the bait. Place scent under the roots below the bait. Set in the guide sticks.

SET NO. 7. My Favorite Set. There is one disadvantage, there are never enough places having all the requirements. I make this set at natural crossing places; in trails thru thickets; at edge of swamps or other places 'cats are known to frequent. My special place will be in an opening where there are no trees or bushes, where the sun shines in. A 'cat loves to stop for a while here and often their droppings will be in evidence. This may be at the edge of an old beaver flowage or off an old logging road where there has once been a log yard, or right in the old road itself, also in open mossy places around ledges. There are many types of these small openings and it will be at the edge of these that the type of evergreen tree with long, heavy boughs may be found. This tree is important. Select a place where there is a real bushy evergreen tree. This should be one that send out long branches, anywhere from three to six feet long. The bottom boughs, in where the set is to be made, should be at least two and a half feet above the ground. Lower branches are cut out to prepare an opening that high, but leave those that are on the back side of the tree. Often one will find two trees, side by side, with interlocking boughs — that's fine. The idea of using this type of place is to have a natural shelter over the set so the first snow storm will not bury or block the trap. Dig back some of the top soil at the base of the tree and place on the ground a bait such as a whole rabbit; a couple muskrat carcasses or even half of a beaver, a big bait of some kind. Cover this bait lightly with leaves, moss or the other material that was dug back. Do not make a cubby or enclosure from any green or heavy junks of wood but find two small, dead evergreen trees with brushy tops and pull them in so they form a natural obstruction each side of the trap, this will force an animal to go in over the trap to reach the bait. Leave a clean, wide open space between the two obstructions, eighteen inches or two feet wide. The trap should be placed and camouflaged at least two feet from the bait. I do something different with guide sticks here — they are placed just beyond the trap. Years ago I found that sometimes at sets of this nature a 'cat will come as far as the guide sticks and no further. When they do so with this set they will be on the trap pan. There is no question but what I have experienced better luck with this set since I changed to placing the guide sticks in back of the trap. However, I do stick in a very small stick each side of the front of the trap, it may not be heavier than a match. I also at this set make use of a stepping stick as well as the guide sticks. The stepping stick lays horizontal and around four inches above the ground at end of trap. Guide sticks are not stuck in crossed but as a rule a couple inches apart at the ground and on a slant so they will be four inches apart where they come up past the stepping stick. Stepping stick should not be more than one half inch in diameter. Sprinkle some wild cat urine on the ground beyond the trap and up on the tree trunk smear on some skunk musk and other wild-cat scent if you wish. Often it will be best to work two or three, long, wide bushy boughs into the branches above the trap for a more complete pro-

tection from snow. If well made with clean, woods smelling trap, using clean gloves at the time, not only will this set take bob-cat, but also fox and fisher. I know. I have caught them.

SET NO. 8. Blowdown Set. This is similar to the previous set, No. 7. If a fresh blown over, large fir or spruce is found where 'cats are likely to travel, the body of the tree, up where the thick brush is, will usually be two or three feet above the ground. Cut a sound, hardwood tree, three or four inches in diameter where there is a crotch; cut off the crotch limbs so they will be about a foot long. Cut off body of tree below the crotch the proper length so you can get under the blowdown, near where the set is to be made and fit the crotch up against the body of the blowdown and the square end against the ground so the blowdown will not settle down under the weight of deep snow. This set will last for years. I have one ten years old and have taken three 'cats, fox and other animals in it. Now pick out best place in the heavy limbs, leaving the high ones running out three or four feet above the ground for a roof, but cleaning out a two foot wide space under those, all the brush, back under to body of the tree. Leave in all the brush on the back side and maybe add some to it. If there is not covering enough over roof then fasten a few more long boughs so they will jut out over the trap; now proceed and finish the set as described in No. 7. It's a peach of a set and not quickly noticed by hunters.

SET NO. 9. The Lean-to Set. Efforts should be made during the winter months to have most sets placed under shelters where snow will not put them out of working order. Under large, leaning trees, upturned roots, shelving ledges and other natural places are often found and with a few repairs are quickly converted into rain and snowproof shelters in which sets can be made. At other times it will be necessary to construct the whole shelter and in this case a bough lean-to located in the borders of an evergreen thicket or other suitable place will serve the purpose. This is constructed by wiring or nailing a strong cross pole, four feet above the ground, between two trees, two or three feet apart. Several poles are laid on this cross piece and run on a slant, down and into the ground, four feet back from base of trees. These poles will serve as framework for the roof. Cover roof and sides with plenty of boughs, allowing several large ones to jut well out, and lop down, over the front. Place bait on the ground in the back end of shelter. Sometimes a whole rabbit can be propped up in lifelike position and frozen in that shape. Place plenty of scent on dry piece of wood or bark and lay on the ground between trap and bait. Complete set as described in TRAP BEDS and in Set No. 7. Always try to make sets so the prevailing winds will not drift snow into them. One will be bothered some with this problem, whatever he does and many a time will use the toe of his snowshoe for a shovel.

SET NO. 10. Open End Set. This is something the same as No. 9 but instead of a slanting roof make one that is flat on top with the roof running back four or five feet, such as pictured in the illustration. The sides are closed in with long, green boughs, but the front and back are left open so an animal can see and walk thru. Bob-cats are not near as shy of this as some are of the Lean-to set. Of course in making this set one must have two sets of two trees, or can drive down a stake or two in order to put in two cross poles on which to lay the roof poles. A big bait such as a beaver carcass is laid on the ground, midway, and often it is well to have a big bait

hanging from one of the roof poles, up high. The inside height of this enclosure should be around three feet. Give those tall cats plenty of room. At this set the stepping stick and guide sticks may be placed in front or in back of the traps. One trap is set under each end of the roof. Fasten trap rings so that one trap on the foot of an animal cannot reach and spring the other trap. Allow the animal to spring the other trap with one of his free feet. This is a fine fisher set too and the set illustrated took a fisher the first winter. Sprinkle 'cat urine around in the set and smear skunk musk up on top of the set or on one of the trees. (See picture inside front cover.)

SET NO. 11. Snowshoe Set. During hard traveling, bob-cats will sometimes start following snowshoe trails and if this happens, temporary, yet effective sets are very quickly made. Flip the snowshoe around and step about half the length of it, straight out from the main trail. Jounce down hard and settle the track down to a level with the trail. From an overhanging branch hang up a piece of deer skin, or other curiosity bait so it will dangle directly over the far end of the track. Bring the foot and snowshoe back into the trail and place a trap in the entrance of the track and put in the guide sticks. It will also, probably be necessary to stick down a small, dead branch each side of each guide stick to close off the opening and direct the animal over the trap.

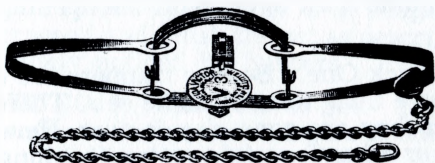
SET NO. 12. Beaver Trappers Quick One. Beaver trappers are often operating in good 'cat country but have little time to make sets. There are just so many minutes in a day, when they are gone, day is over. Here is a set quickly made. Obtain a dry cedar or other log, eight or ten feet long and six or more inches in diameter, place one end on the snow and run the other end up into the branches of a small evergreen tree, about two feet above the snow. Hang a fresh beaver carcass in the tree, above the pole, so it is unhandy for an animal to reach it from the ground but easy to get at from the log. Cut away brush so it is easy to see and get at from the log. Cut a notch in the log about a foot from the bait and place the trap. The No. 2 Victor Coil Spring is ideal for this set. This set also takes marten and fisher.

SET NO. 13. Blind Set. These are the sets that take our sharpest bob-cats. After a trapper has operated in a locality for a couple years he learns some of the places a 'cat is likely to travel if one comes thru. Traps well placed in game trails, paths, old lumber roads and other places, without the use of scent or bait has taken some of my prize catches. If I find a carcass that one or more are feeding upon and there is no snow to register their tracks, I check around, 100 or more feet away and by instinct, pick out places I believe they will travel to and from the bait and put in the traps — usually with success. Twice in my life I have had a 'cat that evidently had a beat path at a well made, baited set but wanted nothing to do with it. In fact would circle in back instead of going past the front; both times I put in a blind set back of the enclosure using small, dry balsam branches for guide sticks and both times got the 'cats. Years ago when the woods up here were full of trappers many of the older 'cats had experienced pinched toes and knew what scents, baits, enclosures, traps etc. were for, just as well as the trapper who put them out.

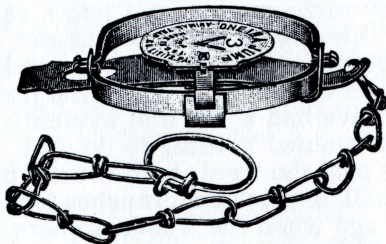
Back in the early thirties I came in contact with a shy old Bob. Once or twice during the season he would come in, probably lived most of the time up in the thickets on the mountain, never go twice in the same place and had no use whatsoever for scents or bait. Finally the second year I saw

where he came into an old road and went about eight rods where he had once traveled the year before. The third year I says, maybe he will try that again this year, so I put in a blind set that I could scarcely detect myself, there were sticks and brush in the road any how and I used them for a stepping stick and guide sticks. Before the snows came he tried it — I had him. Was he mad? Told me what he thought of that business in no uncertain growls.

Don't ever under-rate blind sets.



**No. 2 and No. 3 Long Spring traps are fine for Bob-cat.**



**Oneida Jump Traps in sizes No. 3, 4 and 14 are traps that will hold the largest Maine bobcat.**

## WUCHAK THE FISHER

The fisher travels under other aliases, namely, pekan, black-cat and pennant marten. He is one of the larger members of the weasel family. Their natural habitat, where they have not been exterminated, is more in the cold, northern tier of the United States and then north, up thru Canada and Alaska. They are great travelers and burn up much energy, consequently they are hungry most of the time. They eat nearly all kinds of meat, but their favorite diet seems to be porcupine and they experience little trouble in killing Mr. Quill Pig. Some of the better baits are: large pieces of porcupine, or the whole carcass; the same with rabbit and beaver; the whole carcass of muskrat, skunk or mink; any game bird not fit for table use; the lungs and large bloody junks of game animals not fit for table use; the inwards, blood etc. where a game animal has been dressed out in the woods will call fisher if near their natural "Beat". I have never resorted to the use of fish but understand that rough fish, such as suckers, pickerel etc. make very good bait. They are not fussy whether the bait is fresh or tainted, in fact the latter is likely to draw them from a greater distance.

Usually the inexperienced trapper will have to spend one winter learning the natural "Beats" and may not take many fisher, whereas, the experienced fisher trapper can go into new country and, on bare ground, make good guesses as to where the "Runs" will be and take his share of pelts.

Their natural haunts is in black growth, rough, rugged country, especially around bluffs and mountains where will be found boulders, ledges and caves where porcupines are more likely to be found in their dens. However, the fisher will also make trips into the low grounds where porcupines are also found along with rabbits and other food.

"THE BEAT". My experience with fisher has been that they will travel a long distance, maybe two weeks or more in covering their "Beat" and may cross two or more townships in doing so. When traveling from one locality to another will invariably travel the same route, like we would a blazed trail. They travel, or seem to in a circuit, not returning on the same route.

A number of years ago, during our several years of annual closed season, another trapper and I studied a fisher for two or three winters. He would cross our old road going west, and in exactly the same spot every time, when he returned a week or ten days later he would be two miles to the south and cross, going east, in exactly the same place there each time. He never varied. We were probably about midway of his "Beat". Of course, when they get hungry they will settle down and hunt and will then criss cross around over their hunting grounds quite a bit. During that long closed season we would make our bob-cat sets far from where we knew the natural fisher "Beats" were and seldom ever caught a fisher, yet our 'cat sets were fine fisher sets. Eventually they became so plentiful that some of us were hard pressed to get in 'cat sets, safe from fisher, and made but few, then the fisher cleaned out every last porcupine and nearly all the rabbits and then left the woods and hit out into more civilized country. We have but few fisher left up here in the wilderness now — nothing for them to eat. The bulk of them now seem to be down in South West Maine. I know one out of state fur buyer who bought over 1000 fisher pelts from one local buyer down there this season and probably a great many more were taken

in that region. I am writing this in late winter of 1964. Probably trappers take fisher there and most anywhere, in any type of set, but this is an unnatural condition and I am certain will not last long. Up here I covered much ground and after snow came took every fisher but one that I knew of coming thru here and I pelted five.

**TRAPS.** I like the No. 2 Victor Coil Spring, the No. 2 Victor double bow or long spring and the No. 2 Blake & Lamb double, long spring. Also my No. 3 Oneida Jump underspring traps, but I have these with the Holdfast Jaw clamped on one of the jaws. I used to lose heavy animals out of the No. 3 Underspring traps before equipping them with the Holdfast Jaws. I like a trap with ample jaw spread as big fisher have big feet.

**MOUNTAINSIDE SET.** First I will explain a set I have originated for the type of country I have up here and feel sure the same conditions are usually found thru-out the northern fisher domain. There are many fisher, when they get into a trap, that settle right down to the business of getting free and go for the foot that is in the trap and do not hesitate to chew it off — they are noted for footing themselves. Years ago we used to rig up a big flip-pole with a heavy weight on the back end; Fisher got into trap, first yank tripped the pole and up into the air he went and we had him, BUT, come a gale wind, swaying the trees and often the trap would be found, still set, but hanging from the end of the pole, high above the ground, also a fisher would, now and then, get the chain wound around something and would not trip the pole — it was far from being a sure fire set. I have worked out a set that up until now has been sure fire, and not only that, if one is trapping where hunting dogs are likely to find sets this is nearly dog proof as the trap is several feet above the ground.

Usually the best fisher runs are around bluffs, mountain sides and similar places. I pick out a steep place and then run a six or seven inch pole out to a tree eight to twelve feet away. I have no dog problem so run it about horizontal. If one is likely to run into dog trouble then the far end of the pole should be at least two feet higher than the end on the ground. This pole should extend about two feet beyond the tree. When I know I am going to make one of these sets I carry along a bit-stock and a quarter inch bit. I bore a hole thru my pole right where it is going against the tree and then using the back of my Hudson Bay axe I drive a ship spike, a foot long, thru the hole and then hammer the spike all the way, into the tree. That pole must be solid as a 50 pound bob-cat might get into this set and when he falls it will give that pole a severe test. When the pole is fastened the top end should be anywhere from 7 to 10 feet above the ground. I find another pole an inch or so in diameter and nail to the side of the big pole, out as far as the tree, so the top sides of both will be level with each other. If you have dog trouble use a three foot piece out where the trap bed will be.

Now using six strands of No. 19 stovepipe wire I twist them into one big solid wire, the proper length. One end of this wire is fastened around the far end of the pole, very secure, then with staple or nail fasten it so it can not be pulled off. Now right close to the tree, hew a flat place on the top of the two poles to place the trap upon. If all is properly done the trap chain can now be extended out so the loose end of the wire can be run thru the trap ring and fastened securely, right up close to the pole. Beyond the trap, several inches, place the carcass of a muskrat, any good bait will do but a muskrat carcass fits along the top of the pole very nicely. Using a



piece of galvanized window screening, the right size, place this over the whole carcass and nail the back edge of it to the pole, bring it over the bait and down around under the pole and using a single strand of stovepipe wire at each end, wire the screen down solid over the bait. There is now a nice big bait, all in sight, but no raven or other bird is going to make away with it. Any brush, bushes or small tree under the end of the pole where the catch is going to hang down should all be removed so the animal is not going to have anything to fasten onto.

In most cases the trap when set is up there where you can not reach it from the ground, unless you play center for one of the professional basketball teams. Now, there will be the steep, slanting bank or ledge, between the tree and the butt end of the pole, where it lays on the ground. Cut a solid pole, the right length, and fasten it horizontally about three feet up on the trunk of the tree and run it on a slant away from the tree and trap pole, back into the bank or notch in the ledge; or there may be another tree a couple feet away, situated just right, so the pole can be spiked to the set-tree and the other one. This should be in the right position so you can step up onto this pole and not be under the pole the trap is set upon. Stand on this pole when placing the trap and bait. When a catch is made the easiest way to handle the matter is to unfasten the wire from the trap ring and bring trap and game to the ground. Remove the catch and set the trap on the ground and then step up on the pole and place trap in the proper place and refasten trap ring, taking care not to get your nose or hat brim into the trap. You will know what I mean once you get to work at the task. So far I have been lucky and only caught my coat sleeve a couple of times.

It is a fine winter set as the snow bothers but little, if too much does accumulate on the pole, bait and trap, it is easily brushed off. There is one drawback; if a fisher come along, down on the ground, below the set, he can very well keep going and never smell the bait several feet above; to counteract this I cut a piece of bait into small bits, inch or half inch pieces and throw these in all directions under the set and down the hill. I also rub bloody meat or scent on the base of trees and bushes, making a scent trail up the hill to the end of the pole, where it rests on the ground, and continue this bait or scent trail right out onto the pole and up close to the trap. Mighty few fisher will pass this up.

During winter, with snow coming down every few days, I do not cover the trap at all, but during the fall I do try to keep a full branch of an evergreen fern tucked under end of trap and the tip of the branch out over the pan. However, that may not be necessary. Anyhow, I take fisher. It requires a couple hours of time to construct this set but once it is made it is solid and will last for years. It is worth while.

When the screen is fastened over the bait with the stovepipe wire, do not run that wire over the trap chain. Trap chain should be free, from trap to trap ring so that when an animal steps into the trap and makes its first jump it will go off the pole and find its self hanging down from the end of the pole. There should be nothing within two feet of the hanging animal that it can get hold of. Nearly all fisher will be found dead as animals do not live long hanging from a trap where they cannot get their feet on the ground. A fisher that has never been in a trap is not likely to be very hard to outwit but some of those that have had experience and either footed themselves or pulled free can become very crafty.

Now — this set can be constructed on flat ground. Best pole in this case is a light, dry cedar around 25 feet long. If possible sit the butt on a high knoll, run the top past a solid tree and fasten there just as high as you can reach and then finish set as described above. (See picture inside front cover.)

**THE WATER SET.** The old water set for fox is also excellent for fisher. If a spring or spring brook is located near a fisher run select a spot where there is a dry bank or shore, place a No. 3 Oneida Jump or a No. 2 Blake & Lamb trap so the pan is just under water, with the end of the trap right close to shore. Place a large piece of solid moss over the trap pan and have it reach out to the jaws but not over the jaws. Place a moss covered rock, piece of rotten log or what have you, just beyond the trap, and on this place a nice big bait. There no doubt will be overhanging branches, reach up with bottle or jar containing skunk musk and run the tip end of a branch into it. This application of skunk musk should be repeated about every two weeks as skunk musk evaporates very fast but while it is strong it sure will draw fisher and other animals too. To aid in preventing "Chew Offs" try and get a dead, dry spruce top with many hard branches on it and use this for a trap drag and fasten trap ring close or between some of the branches. This can lay at one side of the set. This is for fisher — not fox. A fisher is not as likely to foot himself if he has plenty of hard brush and branches to fight and chew on. Remember this when making any set for fisher where they are not going to get hung up in the air.

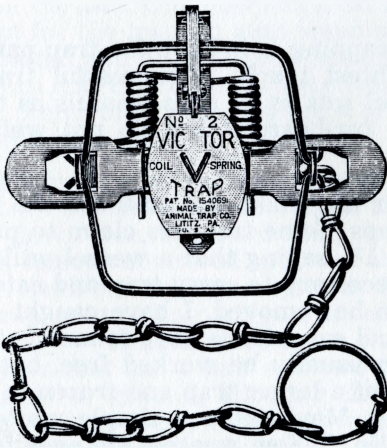
**WALK THRU SET.** This is the double end set described in the chapter of bob-cat trapping. This is a fine winter set for fisher. One of the very best, on the ground, sets.

**ENCLOSURE SETS.** Sets can be made at nature made cubbies in the base of hollow stubs or trees; in wide cracks in the ledges; under shelving boulders or ledges and at other likely looking, natural places. Occasionally it may be necessary to build a cubby if a natural place can not be found. Sometimes there may be large rocks around and a cubby built from those, a large, thin rock for the roof, or what have you. Or, walls may be constructed by standing up junks of wood against a large tree, stump or boulder. Cover top with junks of wood, boughs or other handy material. A large piece of birch bark placed in with the other roof material will aid in keeping rain off the trap.

It is well to cover the top of all cubbies with green boughs, allowing some to jut well out over the front to prevent snow from sifting in over the trap. The inside of cubby should be at least ten inches wide and two feet long and a foot and a half or two feet high. It is well to place a piece of birch bark into trap bed to lay the trap upon. Place several large leaves over pan of trap and out to inside edge of jaws and then camouflage lightly with spills or other natural ground covering. Set in the guide sticks in front of the trap and about four inches from the pan. If convenient try and make set so it faces the opposite direction from which snow storms will approach. However, snow will always be a nuisance. In placing baits, fasten large pieces as solid as possible in the back of the cubbies.

A bait laying on the ground will not freeze as quickly and will be scented much further away by fisher or other animals. A few drops of good lure placed on a dry chip, stick or bunch of dry leaves and laid in near the bait will improve the set, but if possible to do so always use that skunk musk on the tip end of a branch several feet above the set.

**MAKING SCENTS.** A good scent is made by mixing equal parts of ground mink musk sacs; ground muskrat musk sacs and fish juice oil. If you want something special then kill a couple or more porcupines, skin them out, you can do it with care, I have skun out many. Use the meat for bait but get inside and get the bladders and save the urine; now suppose there are three ounces of urine in the bottle, then add one ounce of Vodka, this will keep it fresh. When a fisher is caught remove the musk glands and split them open and add to the porcupine urine, or just split open the glands and scrape out what musk you can and put that in, you may lose some of the musk that way but will not be bothered with the meaty part of the glands in the scent bottle. Fisher are not going to pass this up. Always remember, porcupine to fisher is the same or better than the best Western Beef Steak is to us. That's their meat — nothing better. If you do not care to fuss with concocting your own lure then stock up with Arnold's which you will find is a fisher getter.



**No. 2 Victor Coil Spring, ideal for  
Fisher and Bobcat.**

## TRAPPING THE WEASEL



This mouse killer is a great hunter, and often, not only kills for food but apparently just for the love of killing. Often its victims are left after their life's blood has been sucked out. Mice, house rats, rabbits, birds and sometimes the farmers' chickens fall as easy prey. In the colder states, such as Maine and to the far north it turns snow white after its fur becomes prime in the late fall and remains that way until shedding time the next spring. In warmer climate it holds its brown color when it becomes prime. Its favorite hunting grounds are around brush piles, big stumps, blow-downs, old abandoned camps, stone-walls, hay stacks, wood or log piles and all other similar places. They love to follow alongside of old rail fences and never miss a chance to hunt every swale that is found near a brook or other body of water. In the snow their tracks show up about the same as tho a mink had hopped along but are smaller than mink tracks. However, we do find now and then the track of a giant weasel that will be as large as that of a small mink. Weasels vary a great deal in size and I have had in one collection, weasel pelts, that would run from 11 inches from tip to tip, to giants that would go 24 inches.

The real trick and secret of weasel trapping is to have the trap pan adjusted so it will release from the slightest touch. A successful trapper catches about as many mice in his weasel sets as he does weasels as there are many of these small, blood-thirsty fur-bearers that do not weigh a gram more than a large mouse.

**TRAPS.** The No. 0 Oneida Jump or the Blake & Lamb are the ideal size. No. 0 Long Spring are also good traps. Some trappers claim to prefer the larger sizes as the No. 1 and the No. 1½ saying that a weasel will curl around the No. 0 and freeze, making it necessary to carry trap and catch to camp to thaw out before the animal can be removed. I have caught hundreds of these little fellows and thru actual experience have found that one frozen around the outside of a No. 0 can usually be worked free, but one that has worked its body under the jaws of a larger trap and frozen in that position does have to be carried to camp. Maybe it is a simple matter of personal opinion but I much prefer the No. 0. Few weasels are ever found alive in traps of any size, unless they have just gotten in. Even the No. 0 will kill the majority in a short time.

**SCENTS and BAITs.** Good lure is an aid in calling these animals to a set, but there should always be a good fresh bait to hold them there until caught. Without doubt, the best bait is a large, bloody portion of a rabbit. Also good is scrap meat from freshly killed deer, including lungs and pieces of the green hide; chicken heads, entrails and feathers are fine; outside of beaver meat which is O.K. I never did have much luck with carcasses from fur-bearers taken from my trap line, in fact, raccoon meat up here will drive weasels away from my sets. I have skun out and cut into baits, porcupine and find this a good weasel bait. A scent that will usually bring a weasel to the fresh meat bait is the powerful mixture of one ounce of glycerine, one fourth ounce of fish juice oil, one half ounce ground beaver castor

and one fourth ounce of powder asafetida. Add to this the musk glands from some of the weasels you catch. If this congeals too solid in the bottle during extreme cold weather add one ounce of Vodka. If you do not care to mess with scent making you will find Arnold's a fine weasel lure.

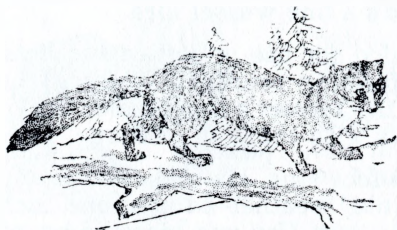
**THE BOX SET.** This set is recommended for use in settled districts. Around fences, wood-lots and swamps in farming country there will be house cats as well as weasels and catching the farmer's pet mouser is not the best method in the world to make friends with the land owners.

Make some small wooden boxes about a foot long, six inches high and six inches wide, inside measurements. Use old, weather beaten, one inch boards — something that will not be conspicuous. Use one piece of board for cover and for hinges cut some half inch wide and four inches long, pieces of leather, from old leather top rubbers or what have you. Fasten one of these near each end of the cover and then down onto back side of the box with big tacks or small nails. On front of box drive in a staple, then fasten solid string or piece of fine wire to cover, this can be brought down and made secure in the staple so nothing can lift up the cover after the set has been placed. A hole about 1½ inch across is made thru one end of the box, near the floor. Inside, at the back end, a big piece of fresh rabbit or other good bait is fastened and the trap placed right in front of that on the floor of the box. Trap ring is fastened inside of the box. Scent may be placed side of the bait. One now has a cat and snow proof set at practically no cost except for the trap. In auto trapping one can have these boxes all made up and baited and all that is necessary is hop out, grab a box, place it, set up the trap and fasten down the cover and continue on the way. Junks of old bark, pieces of wood, dead ferns or swale grass may be used to partly conceal the box.

The most effective woods set is to locate a place where there are weasel tracks in the snow, or where you are sure they will travel. At a brush pile, blow-down tree, upturned roots, hollow log, fallen in camp or other likely place, select a sheltered spot and about six inches from the ground fasten a large, fresh bait to some object, or fasten it down with a pointed stick. Place the trap, set to a hair trigger, under or in front of the bait. No trap covering necessary — it does more harm than good. Gather a big armful of balsam boughs a foot and a half and two feet long and one by one stick them into the snow or ground, allowing them to lean against the object the bait is fastened. If properly placed, they will form a complete covering for the set. Use plenty of boughs to prevent snow from blowing thru to block the trap. Not necessary to leave an opening, as a weasel will soon work his way in thru the boughs once he smells the scent and bait. (See picture inside back cover.)

These little animals are easily tamed and I have had more than one make my trapping camp his home and soon learn to take food from my hand. I well remember one big giant weasel that would come in and hop all around the camp, under my feet, inspecting everything as I prepared the evening meal. I would always bring in mice to him from my trap line and he was looking for them. Needless to say, we set no weasel traps nearer than a mile from camp as we did not wish to catch him. He was fun.

## TRAPPING THE MARTEN



With possibly few exceptions the marten found here in the United States grade in color and quality below those of Alaska and Canada. In fact, many of our marten are so pale and freak colored that the pelts bring only a fraction of that of a nice Canadian. (See picture inside back cover.)

Late in the nineteenth century there were many thousands of marten to be found thruout our northern tier of states, but with their dislike for civilization and being easy to trap, their numbers were greatly reduced until today there are thousands of professional trappers who have never seen one of these interesting fur-bearers. Perpetual closed seasons are bringing back their numbers in some states, here in Maine they are now quite plentiful in many of the spruce timbered sections — in fact they are becoming a nuisance to many wilderness trappers, getting into mink, fox, fisher and bob-cat sets.

As much of the trapping for this animal is carried on in the mountains and heavy timbered wilderness where heavy falls of snow is a regular occurrence, sets should be made where they are not likely to be buried under deep snow as the marten is a great climber and does not hesitate to go up a pole or log to where the set is placed. If the trapper knows he is going to be trapping after the deep snow arrives it is wise to select places two or more feet above the ground and run a pole or log from ground up to bottom of the set. Sets may be made in the openings that lead into hollow trees, stubs, logs, stumps, up-turned roots and similar places. Sometimes cracks or small caves will be found in the ledges which will provide ideal places to stick in traps.

The No. 1 and No. 1½ underspring or long spring traps are fine for marten but if fisher are also likely to be taken a larger trap such as the No. 2 Victor Coil Spring may be used but care should be taken that this trap is adjusted to spring quite easy as the marten is a light animal, scarcely heavier than a mink and some not as heavy.

If the set needs to be enclosed, more than the natural opening, do so with the usual items such as pieces of bark, rocks, pieces of wood and ever-green boughs. Quite often tho, one will find places where little extra has to be done except the placing of guide or stepping sticks and such natural places are far more likely to take any shy fur-bearer.

Marten also fall victims to the water set such as made for fox and fisher. In fall trapping, before deep snow comes, a quick set is to dig a hole two or three inches in diameter under the roots of a tree, stump or what have you, deep enough to put in a good fresh bait and place trap at opening, lightly covered. A few drops of skunk musk is placed under the roots at the hole. This set can also be made for bob-cat and fisher but in such cases larger and stronger traps should be used. It is good for any fur-bearer until it is buried under deep snow.

The Mountainside set as described for fisher is absolutely perfect for marten; however, if fisher are not likely to be encountered this set may be made for marten quite quickly. For instance, if one can find a dead fir, spruce, pine or cedar, cut a log that is five or six inches in diameter at the point where the trap will be placed. Pole or log should be the proper length for the general conditions present, anywhere from six to ten feet. Now fasten the pole up on the tree with four or five strands of stove pipe wire. For marten it need not be as high up as for fisher, keep it down so it can be reached from the ground where the trap and pait is to be placed. Fasten nice bait to side of tree a few inches above the trap. No covering required on the trap. Fasten trap ring to the tree or out on the pole beyond the trap. Skunk musk should be smeared on the pole beyond the trap or up on the tree near the bait. Throw bits of bait on the ground and lay a scent trail to butt of pole as described in the fisher set.

Always keep an eye out for trees that have blown over but lodged up from the ground in another tree, now and then one will be found that is a perfect natural for a marten or fisher set.

**BAITS and SCENTS.** Rabbit are very good; fresh meat from skun out porcupine and scrap meat from game animals including the bullet shattered bloody parts are often used. Here in Maine we have many red squirrels and our marten really hunt, kill and eat them. Good bait — the whole carcass. They also go for fresh beaver meat. However, I am convinced that the right type or kind of scent is as good or better than bait. There is no doubt whatever in my mind but what skunk musk is absolutely the best scent for marten. When in business I used to be in contact with some of the best marten trappers in North America. One of my customers who took many marten every season used nothing but my skunk musk, a few drops in the hair on a small piece of moose hide. Several of my customers were trapping in Canada, bought their skunk musk from me, used this in small wads of cotton batten for an attractor and individually would take as high as 50 marten a season. They used no bait. However, when available, I recommend the use of a good fresh bait along with scent.

Arnold's Marten Scent contains no skunk musk for the simple reason that many trappers who prefer skunks musk wish to have it unmixed with other ingredients, but Arnold's Marten Scent has been pronounced more than once as the best Marten Scent on the market. One old Rocky Mountain professional used to have me put it up for him in pint bottles.

Trapping methods for the animals mentioned in this book are somewhat interlocking and it is for that reason I say, if you are only interested in the trapping of one, read and study the methods for all four fur-bearers covered in these methods.

MAY LADY LUCK BE YOUR TRAPLINE COMPANION.

*Walter L Arnold*



**A fine weasel set. Place green boughs over front to keep out drifting snow.**



**Rare white marten, taken along the Arnold trapline.**